

# *News Clippings*

2/25/08

## **DHS**

### **Indianapolis**

'I am multifaceted'

[Read the Article](#)

### **Madison**

County's emergency standards improved

[Read the Article](#)

## **FIRE**

### **Evansville**

Jasper named location for fire training center

[Read the Article](#)

## **FLOODING**

### **DeMotte**

You can buy flood insurance

[Read the Article](#)

### **Fort Wayne**

Flood victims urged to contact FEMA

[Read the Article](#)

Counties eligible for disaster assistance

[Read the Article](#)

Federal Help Available for Indiana Flood Victims

[Read the Article](#)

### **Indianapolis**

Disaster aid OK'd for 12 more counties

[Read the Article](#)

More Indiana Counties to Receive Disaster Assistance

[Read the Article](#)

### **Madison**

County's emergency standards improved

[Read the Article](#)

### **Warsaw**

FEMA Assistance Available To Flood Victims

[Read the Article](#)

## **SEVERE WEATHER**

### **Fort Wayne**

Severe weather week begins March 2

[Read the Article](#)

### **Monticello**

Keeping an educated eye on the Hoosier sky

[Read the Article](#)

### **Muncie**

Statewide severe weather drill set for March 5

[Read the Article](#)

Severe weather drill set for March 5

[Read the Article](#)

### **Noblesville**

Severe weather spotter training offered in Fishers

[Read the Article](#)

February 25, 2008

## 'I am multifaceted'

Carson's Muslim faith, Farrakhan's funeral speech raise questions for congressional candidate

By Robert King

[robert.king@indystar.com](mailto:robert.king@indystar.com)

February 25, 2008

Andre Carson's greatest political asset may be his grandmother's name, but one of his biggest liabilities is proving to be her funeral.

That's because his family gave a spot in the parade of dignitaries who eulogized Congresswoman Julia Carson to Louis Farrakhan, whom Jewish leaders consider one of America's leading anti-Semites, gay rights activists consider a homophobe and who famously referred to white people as "devils."

In recent weeks, Andre Carson has been reassuring Jewish leaders here and in Washington that Farrakhan's appearance wasn't his idea. He has spoken publicly about his distaste for discrimination, homophobia or racism of any kind. He has talked repeatedly of his desire for unity.

But the Farrakhan episode also called attention to something that went largely unrecognized before -- that Andre Carson is a Muslim and that, if elected March 11, he would be Indiana's first Muslim representative in Congress and only the second in U.S. history.

How his faith will factor with voters, if at all, is unknown. But in a post-September 11 world, it has led some of his own campaign advisers to interject, without being prompted, that Andre Carson is not an *Osama bin Laden* Muslim. And since the funeral -- which included Farrakhan's own plug for Carson's candidacy -- the young Carson has been trying to explain that he also is not a *Louis Farrakhan* Muslim.

Carson says his faith is just part of who he is. "It is not the totality. Like every other human being, I have various faces," he said. "I am multifaceted."

He does, indeed, have many faces: raised Baptist, taught in Catholic schools, introduced to New Age transcendentalism by his grandmother and hired to work in government counterterrorism operations.

### Adult convert

Carson, 33, says he can't recall exactly when and where, but it was roughly 10 years ago that he first recited the Shahada, the Muslim profession of faith. Like most observant Muslims, he says he doesn't drink alcohol.

He tries to faithfully pray the five daily required prayers of Islam at the appointed times but admits that his busy schedule, of late, makes it difficult. He makes up the missed prayers when he can. One staple, says his wife Mariama, a 32-year-old elementary school assistant principal, is that they try to pray together as a couple at least once a day.

Carson has yet to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, not unheard of for a man his age, but it is still something all able-bodied Muslims must do.

Since his conversion, Carson has been a regular at Friday afternoon prayers at the Nur-Allah Islamic Center, where the imam is Indianapolis firefighter Michael Saahir, who denounces terrorism as un-Islamic.

The Islamic Center has its roots in the Nation of Islam, but with the death of its founder in 1975, the denomination began to split. One branch, represented in Indianapolis at Nur-Allah, embraced a moderate, universal form of traditional Islam that abandoned the call for black separatism.

Farrakhan would, at around the same time, re-establish the Nation of Islam and much of its racially charged message. But he did it without people like Saahir, who felt black separatism ran counter to Islam's call for universal unity.

It was in this fractured setting of black Islam in America that a spiritually curious teenager named Andre Carson began trying to sort out his beliefs.

### **Dodge City**

Andre Carson had been born into a solidly Baptist household. His mother, Tanya Carson, made him read Bible stories each night. Before he could go to bed, he had to present her with written summaries of what he'd read. He was baptized in his grandmother's church, Tabernacle Baptist, on the Eastside.

Yet through the seventh grade, he went to a Catholic school, St. Rita's, on the Near Northside, where he developed an interest in the priesthood. It ended when he hit puberty, he admits now, but not until after his priests encouraged him to begin studying the world's religions in preparation for such a calling.

So, in a neighborhood where gangs and drugs were rampant, an adolescent Andre Carson began studying the Talmud, a collection of ancient oral Jewish teachings, and the Bhagavad-Gita, the sacred text of Hindus.

His grandmother encouraged such pursuits. Although a Baptist, she had dabbled in New Age transcendentalism herself. And she would offer to her grandson volumes of Rumi, the 13th-century Sufi poet of Persia, and point him to the writings of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, the 20th-century Jewish mystic who was a contemporary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

From Heschel, Carson says he was impressed by his notions against religious bigotry and "really living the golden rule."

A former rap artist, Carson considers himself a poet. And he says he was struck Rumi's ability to reach deeply into the soul. "It emanated with me in terms of my own writings of poetry," he said, "and speaking from his heart and not being restricted."

Perhaps most transformative, though, was the "Autobiography of Malcolm X," the story of a complex man who preached black separatism as a spokesman for the Nation of Islam only to moderate his views before his death. That story -- and the young Nation of Islam men patrolling his neighborhoods -- made Andre curious, he said. But he couldn't get past the divisiveness embodied by Farrakhan.

"That did not match my experiences or personal beliefs," Carson said. "So, for me, it was like it was good to see the drug dealers being pushed out. But the philosophy and the ideology do not match who I am."

Even so, Carson attended Farrakhan's Million Man March in 1995 -- with a white friend, he says -- because of his interest in black men taking responsibility, rather than any aspect of Farrakhan's persona.

"I was one of the many people," Carson points out, "who didn't agree with everything he said. Still don't."

Muhammad Siddeeq, the father of a friend, helped Carson sort through things. He spent hours answering Carson's questions about Islam, the Nation and Farrakhan. "It was really touching for me," Siddeeq said, "because he was such a youngster and he was seeking clarification."

Andre confronted a choice many young black men considering Islam face, Siddeeq said: To follow Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, with its street credibility on social matters but record of divisiveness, or more universal Islamic teachings that promote tolerance. At crunch time, Siddeeq said, Carson chose tolerance.

"This man," Siddeeq said, "moved in the spirit of what was right and what was wrong and he made the right decision, at the right time."

### **New to politics**

Until six months ago, Andre Carson was simply a guy with a career, a family and a grandmother in Congress. He had been extensively involved in managing Julia Carson's campaigns. But he never had been a candidate.

He has spent the bulk of his adult life -- nine years -- as an officer with the State Excise Police, a plainclothes job enforcing alcohol, tobacco and gambling laws. He also spent nearly a year dealing with counter-terrorism efforts at the state Department of Homeland Security, where Carson says he worked as a watch supervisor in a job that worked with the FBI, the CIA and the Drug Enforcement Administration on issues ranging from supremacist groups to threats of terrorism.

Many American Muslims and others have grown leery of the government's surveillance efforts, saying they have intruded into personal privacy. Carson said he is sensitive to that, and opposes racial and ethnic profiling. In the give and take between civil liberties and security, he says civil liberties must come first.

Carson said he was drawn to law enforcement as a kid, from reporting drug activity in his neighborhood through a crime-watch program and, more pointedly, after hearing a friend tell him about being molested by a man in the neighborhood. Carson says he saw fear in the boy's eyes. "I wanted to do something about it," he said. He eventually earned an undergraduate degree in criminal justice.

Carson says his first notions about running for political office came to him when he was 10, prompted by his 1984 trip with his grandmother to the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco. That was the year Jesse Jackson made his first run at the presidency. It opened his eyes to what could be.

When there was a Democratic vacancy on the City-County Council last summer, he jumped at the opening and won the seat through a party caucus. In November, he was unopposed for re-election. Then his grandmother announced her terminal cancer.

Others began mentioning his name as a replacement. And a day after being sworn in to his first full council term again in January, he became a candidate for Congress. He won the party's nod, again through the party caucus process.

The March 11 special election will mark the first time Carson has had to face voters in a competitive race. His platform, so far, seems cut from Julia Carson's playbook. First and foremost, he opposes the war in Iraq and wants to bring the troops home quickly. He supports gay rights and abortion rights. He talks about being a "voice for the voiceless." He wants to preserve Social Security.

More than anything, though, he said Julia taught him to help people.

"She got a thrill out of it," he said, "and it rubbed off on me."

With the competitive race has come closer scrutiny. And while Carson said he understood that comes with the territory, he has bristled at times over questions about Farrakhan's appearance at the funeral.

### **Old ties**

Julia Carson and Louis Farrakhan go way back.

They were together, says Andre's wife, on the night Andre Carson was born. They were acquainted from Farrakhan's visits to meetings of the Congressional Black Caucus. When Farrakhan came to Indianapolis in 1997, Julia showed up at Farrakhan's news conference and gave him a hug. And as she lay dying in her Near-Northside home, Farrakhan called to wish her well.

Andre Carson knew little of the personal history. He said he had never met Farrakhan. Word of Farrakhan's phone call came to him from his grandmother's professional caregivers, and from Julia herself. As a grandson, Carson insists he was far from the final voice on her arrangements.

But he still sought advice from Siddeeq, who said he must honor his grandmother's wishes.

Andre says he owed his grandmother more than most grandsons.

His father was mostly absent as Andre grew up. His mother was loving but had significant personal problems he doesn't discuss. At their low point, when Andre says he was a preschooler, he and his mother wound up living in a homeless shelter. That's when he said Julia, whom he called GiGi, took them in and gave him a home for good.

Andre says he watched her live out a life of service. He also says she tried to teach him responsibility by forcing him, at age 14, to start paying her \$50 a month for rent. He got a part-time job washing cars and working as a mover. To this day, Andre says he obsesses about his mortgage payments because of that lesson on paying the bills.

"I can never forget where I come from," he says now. "I will always honor her as long as I live."

### **Surprising eulogy**

So, in the end, he says he chose to honor his grandmother's wishes for her funeral. But matters grew more complicated for him when Farrakhan, while speaking over Julia's casket gave what essentially amounted to an endorsement of Andre as his grandmother's political successor. It was something he and his campaign staffers say he could easily lived without. It sparked letters to the editor referring to Andre as Farrakhan's emissary. Indianapolis political blogger Gary Welsh says Carson should repudiate Farrakhan's endorsement.

"If he disapproves of what he stands for then you wouldn't want his endorsement for the office you are seeking. And I've never heard that," Welsh wrote.

Jewish leaders initially were concerned as well. They asked for a meeting with Carson, heard his explanation of the invitation and accepted it, according to Marcia Goldstone, of the Jewish Community Relations Council. Carson met with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the most powerful Jewish lobby in Washington, which their spokesman, Josh Block, describes as "a good conversation."

Brian Vargus, a political scientist at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, said the Farrakhan flap has been overblown because the minister is, in his view, largely irrelevant to most voters. He says the fact that the 7th Congressional District leans heavily Democratic should override other factors. But he said it will be interesting to see if political opponents will try to make an issue of Carson's faith.

Marion County Republican Chairman Tom John and Carson's opponent, State Rep. Jon Elrod, say Carson's faith shouldn't be an issue.

But polling last year by The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life suggests that it already is. Pew's survey found that 45 percent of Americans say a candidate would be less likely to garner their support if he or she holds the Muslim faith.

Carson has tried to deflect this, saying his faith is merely a compartment in his life.

And indeed his support for abortion and gay rights would be at odds with many Muslims, whose views on social matters tend to be conservative. He has said little about Middle East peace other than he supports a secure Israel and a two-state solution to peace process for Israel and the Palestinians.

The bottom line, he says, is that his candidacy could be a good way to teach people about racial and religious unity. He is convinced his faith won't be an obstacle, saying, "I think the voters are bigger than that."

[Back to Indianapolis](#)



# **THE MADISON COURIER**

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## **County's emergency standards improved**

**Friday, February 22, 2008**

The Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency raised its compliance level with Indiana Department of Homeland Security standards from 48 percent in 2006 to 90 percent in 2007, EMA director Dave Bell told the county commissioners Thursday night.

The improvement brings the level of state reimbursement of Bell's \$21,000 salary to 55 percent, up 10 percent from last year.

Bell will have been EMA director in Jefferson County for one year next month. Among the changes Bell has implemented as director is a "compliance emergency plan," which coordinates various county response protocol to emergencies.

Also at Thursday's meeting, Sheriff Bill Andrews received approval for more money paid to Advanced Correctional Healthcare, the company that provides medical care for inmates at the jail. The increase was needed, Andrews said, because the current flat rate the county pays is only for an average of 55 inmates, while the current average jail population is higher. The county will pay \$1 a day for every average prisoner over the 55 agreed to in the original contract.

When commissioner Julie Berry asked why the jail has exceeded the limit of 55, Andrews replied simply, "More crime."

"We've got a prosecutor that's working me to death," Andrews said. "He's getting some results."

The meeting of the board of commissioners was short because of the ice storm.

[Back to Madison](#)



## Jasper named location for fire training center

Updated: Feb 22, 2008 01:08 PM EST

By Louis La Plante  
[Evansville Business Magazine](#)

The fire training facilities at the Jasper Fire Department will now be the central training location for 10 Southwestern Indiana counties. Officials from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) confirmed the decision, which was made fire officials in the 10-county region, this week.

The Jasper Fire Department has now been cleared as the Indiana District 10 training center.

"It's critical that firefighters receive regular and consistent basic training courses," says Joe Wainscott, chief of IDHS's Division of Training. "With training centers close by, fire departments have more opportunities to improve their individual and collective skills, which makes them better able to safeguard the lives of Hoosiers."

The District 10 center includes the following counties: Dubois, Crawford, Daviess, Gibson, Knox, Martin, Perry, Pike, Posey, Spencer, Vanderburgh and Warrick counties.

[\*\*\*Back to Evansville\*\*\*](#)



## **You can buy flood insurance**

LAFAYETTE, Ind. -- "I didn't think I could get flood insurance" is an all-too-familiar statement to FEMA's Mike Klitzke. "I have literally heard uninsured disaster victims say the same thing on every flood I have ever worked," said Klitzke, an expert on the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). "Sadly those people have almost always been misinformed."

In the case of the Indiana counties affected in the recent presidential disaster, flood insurance was/is available for most residents - before, during and after the flood.

The NFIP is a federal program administered by FEMA, but policies are sold by neighborhood insurance agents. With very few exceptions (those are in coastal barrier areas), it is available to most people living in a community that participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, including renters and condo owners. Even people living in low-to-moderate flood risk area are advised to have flood insurance because almost 25 percent of NFIP claims come from outside high-flood-risk areas.

Officials stress that FEMA can only offer financial assistance to victims in the event of a presidential disaster declaration. The majority of floods are not extensive enough to warrant such a declaration. An NFIP flood policy pays off whether there is a declaration or not. With the average cost of a policy around \$400, a year's worth of flood insurance can be less expensive than one month's car payment.

"If your agent does not sell flood insurance, call the NFIP and we'll find you an agent who will," said Klitzke. "The one caveat is most policies don't go into affect until thirty days after purchase, so if someone buys now, they are planning smart for the future."

That NFIP agent referral number is 1-888-435-6637.

[\*Back to DeMotte\*](#)

Last updated: February 22, 2008 2:22 p.m.

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## Flood victims urged to contact FEMA

### The Journal Gazette

Fort Wayne homeowners and businesses that experienced property damage from flooding this month may now contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency to apply for disaster assistance, city officials announced Friday.

The city is working with FEMA to establish a follow-up center and public meetings, according to the announcement.

On Thursday, FEMA and the Indiana Department of Homeland Security added Allen, DeKalb, Huntington, Kosciusko, Noble and Whitley counties to the list of eligible counties for federal disaster assistance.

Those requesting assistance must first contact FEMA either at 800-621-3262 or online at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov). The hotline is available 24 hours a day. Those using TTY services can call 800-462-7585. The deadline to register is March 31.

Callers are advised to have the following information available:

[\*]Your current phone number.

[\*]Your Social Security number, if available.

[\*]A general list of damages and losses you suffered.

[\*]If insured, your insurance policy number, or your agent and company name.

[\*]General financial information.

[\*]The address of and good directions to the damaged property.

[\*]A phone number where you can be reached during the daytime and early evening.

[Back to Fort Wayne](#)

# GREATER FORT WAYNE **Business Weekly**

Last modified: Friday, February 22, 2008 2:29 PM EST

## Counties eligible for disaster assistance

President George W. Bush has approved disaster assistance for 12 northern Indiana counties affected by flooding.

Allen, DeKalb, Huntington, Kosciusko, Noble and Whitley are among the counties eligible for disaster assistance, which can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, and low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security said in a statement.

Residents and business owners who sustained losses can begin applying for assistance by registering online at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) or by calling (800) 621-3362 or (800) 462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing and speech impaired.

[\*\*Back to Fort Wayne\*\*](#)



## Federal Help Available for Indiana Flood Victims

Updated: Feb 21, 2008 08:19 PM EST

*The following is from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security.*

12 more counties added to Northern Indiana disaster declaration

INDIANAPOLIS (February 21, 2008) -- Governor Mitch Daniels has received word that President George W. Bush has approved disaster assistance for

12 additional Northern Indiana counties affected by flooding that began January 7.

Counties added are Allen, Benton, Dekalb, Huntington, Kosciusko, Lake, Laporte, Newton, Noble, St. Joseph, Starke and Whitley.

Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster.

Residents and business owners who sustained losses can begin applying for assistance by registering online at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) or by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing and speech impaired.

Other counties also eligible for federal assistance include Carroll, Cass, Elkhart, Fulton, Jasper, Marshall, Pulaski, Tippecanoe and White.

They were determined eligible for federal assistance January 31.

**[Back to Fort Wayne](#)**



February 23, 2008

STATE ROUNDUP: [INDYSTAR.COM/INDIANAWIRE](http://INDYSTAR.COM/INDIANAWIRE)

## Disaster aid OK'd for 12 more counties

February 23, 2008

Twelve more Northern Indiana counties that were damaged in January floods are eligible for federal disaster funds. President Bush on Thursday approved the aid for Allen, Benton, DeKalb, Huntington, Kosciusko, Lake, LaPorte, Newton, Noble, St. Joseph, Starke and Whitley counties.

The federal funds can help pay for temporary housing and home repairs, loans for uninsured property losses and other programs for flood victims.

The flooding that began Jan. 7 along the Tippecanoe River and other rivers and streams killed three people, including two children, and caused more than \$33 million in damage. More than 800 homes were damaged, Gov. Mitch Daniels said in his Jan. 23 aid request to Bush.

Counties that were deemed eligible for the disaster funds Jan. 31 are Carroll, Cass, Elkhart, Fulton, Jasper, Marshall, Pulaski, Tippecanoe and White.

Residents and business owners in 21 counties that sustained damage can apply for aid online at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) or by calling (800) 621-3362 or (800) 462-7585 for the hearing- and speech-impaired.

### Purdue getting \$2.2M

West Lafayette -- Purdue University officials on Friday announced that Rick and Cheryl Kosdrosky, engineers at Lockheed Martin's Aeronautics Company in Fort Worth, Texas, have pledged a combined \$2.2 million to the university's College of Engineering and College of Technology.

Star and news service report

[Back to Indianapolis](#)



#### **Press Release**

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Source: Indiana Department of Homeland Security

[\*Back to Indianapolis\*](#)



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[\*\*Back to Madison\*\*](#)



Friday, February 22, 2008

## **FEMA Assistance Available To Flood Victims**

**Daniel Riordan**

Times-Union Staff Writer

Friday, February 22, 2008

Area residents affected by flooding are now eligible to apply for assistance, and are reminded they can buy flood insurance.

Officials from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency announced Thursday that disaster assistance has been made available for 12 more counties, including Kosciusko and Whitley.

Fulton and Marshall counties were already eligible for such assistance.

Individuals and business owners can apply for help on both the state and federal level following President Bush's Jan. 30 disaster declaration.

Help can include funding for temporary housing assistance, grants to help cover expenses not covered by insurance and U.S. Small Business Administration low-interest loans for homeowners, renters and business owners to repair or replace real or or personal property and housing repair.

Individuals and business owners can apply immediately by calling 800-621-3362, 24 hours a day.

Those with a speech or hearing impairment may call 800-462-7585.

An application can be filed online at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

The deadline to register for assistance is March 31.

Callers are advised to have the following information available to help speed up the application process:

- The person's current phone number and daytime and evening phone numbers where they can be reach
- Social Security number, if available
- A general list of damages and losses suffered
- If insured, a insurance policy number, or insurance agent and company name
- The address and good directions to the property

FEMA also is reminding residents that flood insurance is still available after the flooding.

"I didn't think I could get flood insurance" is an all-too-familiar statement to FEMA's Mike Klitzke.



"I have literally heard uninsured disaster victims say the same thing on every flood I have ever worked," said Klitzke, an expert on the National Flood Insurance Program. "Sadly, those people have almost always been misinformed."

The NFIP is a federal program administered by FEMA, but policies are sold by neighborhood insurance agents. With very few exceptions, namely coastal barrier areas, it is available to most people living in a community that participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, including renters and condo owners.

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"If your agent does not sell flood insurance, call the NFIP and we'll find you an agent who will," said Klitzke. "The one caveat is most policies don't go into affect until 30 days after purchase, so if someone buys now, they are planning smart for the future."

That NFIP agent referral telephone number is 888-435-6637.

[\*Back to Warsaw\*](#)

Last updated: February 22, 2008 3:12 p.m.

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## Severe weather week begins March 2

### The Journal Gazette

To focus Hoosiers' attention on threats posed by tornadoes and thunderstorms, Gov. Mitch Daniels has proclaimed March 2 to 8 as Severe Weather Preparedness Week.

The National Weather Service will conduct a statewide test of communication systems on March 5 between 10:30 and 11 a.m. and between 7 and 7:30 p.m. March 7 is the make-up drill day if weather postpones the March 5 drills. These tests should be used as times to practice your plan, the proclamation says.

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security offers these tips during times of severe weather.

### Tornado safety tips

[\*]Basements, inner rooms of a house, and storm cellars provide the best protection.

[\*]Stay away from exterior walls, windows and doors. Stay in the center of the room.

[\*]If you are in a vehicle, do not try to outrun the tornado. A tornado can switch directions and move more quickly.

Get out of the vehicle and go into a strong building if possible. If not, lie flat in a ditch or low area and cover your head.

Do not take shelter under overpasses; wind speeds actually increase under them and can suck you out.

[\*]If you live in a mobile home, get out immediately. Take shelter in a building with a strong foundation.

[\*]Listen to radio or watch television for alerts.

### Thunderstorm safety tips

[\*]If a thunderstorm is coming, postpone or cancel outdoor activities.

[\*]Do not go near tall trees or other tall objects.

[\*]Seek shelter inside a building or in a hardtop vehicle, but don't touch any of the metal inside.

[\*]Do not use the telephone. Stay away from other electronic devices, bare metal and water.

[\*]Do not go near downed power lines.

[\*]Keep your eye on the sky as well as listening to weather reports on the radio or television.

[\*]If caught out in the middle of a large body of water, return to shore as soon as possible. Get off the water immediately.

[\*]If caught out in middle of an open field: If walking with others stay a minimum of 10 feet apart.

Keep low and move quickly to seek shelter. If there is no shelter, lie flat in a ditch or get to the lowest place around.

For more information about preparedness for severe weather and other emergencies, go to [www.in.gov/dhs/3638.htm](http://www.in.gov/dhs/3638.htm).

[Back to Fort Wayne](#)

# Herald Journal

## Keeping an educated eye on the Hoosier sky

**Doug Howard**

Reporter

See-saw temperatures, floods, ice jams, high winds. It's early, but severe weather has already made its presence felt this year.

Although Governor Mitch Daniels has proclaimed March 2-8, 2008 as Severe Weather Preparedness Week in Indiana, severe weather here has a way of cropping up during just about any of the other 51 weeks of the year.

That's why the White County Emergency Management Agency is hosting two opportunities to learn more about detecting and reporting severe weather on Monday, March 3.

The severe weather spotter training courses through the National Weather Service will begin at 1 p.m. at 6:30 p.m. in the commissioners' room on the second floor of the White County Building in Monticello.

"I think with the way the weather was last year, and the way it may be (this year) because of the way things are going now, I want to get as many spotters and people calling in as we possibly can," said White County EMA Director Gordon Cochran.

The class is free, open to both newcomers and long time weather spotters and will cover the same material in both sessions,

"We're trying to get everybody thinking about anticipating the potential for severe weather, rather than reacting to it," said Michael Lewis, warning coordination meteorologist at the National Weather Service office in North Webster.

"The focus that I have this year is on knowing the situation, looking at things several days in advance."

Lewis said the two-hour course will cover basic recognition, observation and reporting skills and will provide more group interaction activities than past sessions.

"It's been 'we through a bunch of information at you and hope that at least one of the seeds that we throw at you plants root,'" said Lewis.

"What I'd like to try to do is make it a little more give-and-take, back and forth and hopefully plant a few more seeds and get a little better growth out of it."

While satellite radar maps and computer models are useful, he said it takes people on the ground to give a more complete picture to help protect life and minimize property damage downstream of severe weather.

"If you look at a satellite (image), you're not really looking all the way down to the ground," he said. "You're not able to see below those cloud bases."

"Our radar is good - it's an invaluable tool and it's a very powerful tool, but the reality is that the way radar works, it's not able to see all the way down to the ground... We may not be able to see what's going on below 6,000 feet - sometimes, a little lower than that, but can't necessarily see what's going on in that 3,000-5,000 foot layer, and that's where a lot of the weather's taking place."

"So what we need is people looking at the sky and telling us what's going on on the ground. That helps us better understand what we're seeing on the radar, what we're seeing on satellite, better understand and warn for the communities downstream and make a better warning process."

Each session is expected to last about two hours, depending on the amount of interaction.

"I figure if we train one or two new people a year it's worth every bit," said White County EMA director Gordon Cochran. "If one of them calls in for a hail storm, or straight line winds or a tornado, whatever the case may be, then they've done their job."

Cochran said the class is one of the few things he makes mandatory for EMA volunteers.

"Every year they put something new in it, every year it's a refresher, if nothing else," he said. "I've been doing it for 10 years now and I find something new every year - you pick up something every time, every year in it."

He also noted after completing the training, participants can contact the National Weather Service in North Webster to be registered as a trained severe weather storm spotter.

The office provides weather and flood warnings, daily forecasts and meteorological and hydrologic data for counties in northern Indiana, northwest Ohio and southern Michigan serving a population of more than 2.3 million people.

"We've got more police officers doing it all the time, and we're getting more and more fire departments all the time," said Cochran of the local storm spotter network. "Those are the people that are out a lot, but we need the people out on the roads going back and forth to work. We need the people standing at the window doing dishes to look out and see a strange-looking cloud to know what it is and call it in."

For more information on the storm spotter classes, contact the White County EMA office at 574 583-4692.

[\*Back to Monticello\*](#)



## Statewide severe weather drill set for March 5

THE STAR PRESS

To focus Hoosiers' attention on the threats posed by tornadoes and thunderstorms, Gov. Mitch Daniels has proclaimed March 2-8 Severe Weather Preparedness Week.

The National Weather Service will conduct a statewide test of communication systems between 10:30 and 11 a.m. and between 7 and 7:30 p.m. on March 5.

March 7 will be the make-up drill day if weather postpones the March 5 drill.

Residents can use those tests at times to practice their own emergency plans.

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) offers these tips for severe weather:

### Tornadoes

- Basements, inner rooms of a house, and storm cellars provide the best protection.
- Stay away from exterior walls, windows, and doors. Stay in the center of the room.
- If you are in your car do not try to outrun the tornado, because it can switch direction and can cover lots of ground quickly.
- Get out of vehicle and go into a strong building if possible. If not, lie flat in a ditch or low area and cover your head.
- Do not go under overpasses; wind speeds actually increase under them and can suck you out.
- If you live in a mobile home, get out immediately. Take shelter in a building with a strong foundation.
- Listen to radio or watch TV so you can be alerted about your current situation.

### Thunderstorms

- If a thunderstorm is coming, postpone or cancel outdoor activity.
- Do not go near tall trees or any other tall objects.
- Seek shelter inside a building or in a hardtop vehicle, but don't touch any of the metal inside.
- Do not use the telephone. Stay away from other electronic devices, bare metal, and water.
- Do not go near downed power lines.
- Keep your eye on the sky as well as listening to weather reports on the radio or TV.
- If caught out in the middle of a large body of water, return to shore as soon as possible. Get off the water immediately.

- If you are caught out in middle of an open field and are walking with others, stay a minimum of 10 feet apart. Also, keep low and move quickly to seek shelter. If there is no shelter lay in a ditch or get to the lowest place around.

For more information about preparedness for severe weather and other emergencies, go to [www.in.gov/dhs/3638.htm](http://www.in.gov/dhs/3638.htm).

**[Back to Muncie](#)**



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**Originally published February 25, 2008**

[\*Back to Muncie\*](#)





Severe weather spotter training offered in Fishers

Written by Staff, on 02-22-2008 19:45

The National Weather Service will conduct severe weather spotter training from 7 to 9 p.m. March 6 at the Fishers Town Hall auditorium.

The training session, hosted by the Fishers Fire Department, is free and is open to the general public.

A representative from the National Weather Service will describe cloud and wind patterns associated with severe weather, how to interpret weather radar data, and how to remain safe during severe weather.

"This is a great opportunity for anyone with an interest in weather, or who is expected to be able to identify and report severe weather at an official level," said Ron Lipps, public information officer for the Fishers Fire Department.

Additional information about this and other National Weather Service presentations can be found at [www.weather.gov/ind](http://www.weather.gov/ind).

[Back to Noblesville](#)